



Digital Literacy and Citizenship Curriculum Overview

Curriculum in a Nutshell

Digital media and technology are evolving at a dizzying pace, bringing with them extraordinary opportunities as well as real risks for young people. Young people are using the immense power of the Internet and mobile technologies to explore, connect, create, and learn in ways never before imagined. But issues that emerge with this 24/7 “connected culture” – from identity theft, to cyberbullying, to uncertainty about which information to trust online – are surfacing both in schools and at home.

Common Sense Media offers this **FREE Digital Literacy and Citizenship Curriculum** to help educators empower their students and their school communities to be safe, responsible, and savvy as they navigate this fast-paced digital world. The curriculum:

- Introduces reliable, research-based information to students about digital media
- Helps students explore the complex issues of our connected culture
- Empowers students to build digital literacy skills for life
- Satisfies all criteria for E-Rate compliance and is aligned to national standards for ISTE (International Society for Technology in Education), AASL (American Association of School Librarians), and the English Language Arts (ELA) Common Core.

This K-12 curriculum has been implemented by classroom teachers, subject area teachers, librarians and technology educators, health educators, and guidance counselors. Lesson activities range from low-tech options, such as discussion and paper-based worksheets, to media-rich videos and online activities. Materials can also be used in informal learning environments, such as after-school programs and community centers, libraries, and museums. Also included are end-of-lesson questions and guidelines that offer authentic assessment opportunities to monitor your students’ progress, as well as assessment questions at the lesson level.

Approach

This research-based curriculum offers a balanced approach to digital literacy education. We celebrate the power of the Internet and other digital media while teaching students to avoid the potential perils of digital life. Based on the work of Howard Gardner and the GoodPlay Project at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, the curriculum emphasizes skill building, critical thinking, ethical discussion, and decision making — using case studies and real-life scenarios. We also integrate media creation and performance opportunities. Common Sense Media takes a whole-community approach to digital literacy and citizenship, providing parents with educational resources and engaging them in discussion. There are unit- and lesson-level parent tip sheets and videos, as well as homework activities for students and parents to do together. You can also find a wealth of parent material and advice on Common Sense Media’s website at www.commonsense.org.

Just Use Common Sense!

Many curricula that address students’ use of media focus only on keeping kids safe. Our curriculum addresses safety and security concerns, but consciously includes ethics and behavior issues as well as Internet research skills. Lessons are designed to be developmentally and culturally appropriate, are geared toward diverse learning styles, and will engage students whether they attend a school with one laptop per child or a school with no laptops at all. Simply put: using Common Sense Media’s **Digital Literacy and Citizenship Curriculum** is just common sense!



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The Strands

The curriculum is divided into three major topical strands, each with its own units and lessons. Educators may choose to teach all the lessons in each of the three strands, or decide to teach individual lessons. Scope and sequence charts as well as implementation guides are available to help you get started. Here is a brief outline of the curriculum strands and units.

	K-5	6-8	9-12
Safety and Security Strand			
Safety Unit	Students learn that there are exciting places to go online, but that they should choose safe, age-appropriate sites.	Students explore the benefits and risks of online talk, and learn how to stay safe when connecting with others online.	Students learn concrete strategies for recognizing predator grooming patterns online and handling unwanted contact.
Security Unit	Students learn how to create strong passwords, handle spam, and understand privacy policies.	Students learn strategies for keeping their information secure online, and identify online scams and schemes.	Students learn strategies for guarding against identity theft and recognizing financial fraud.
Digital Citizenship Strand			
Digital Life Unit	Students learn that the Internet is a community of connected people that have responsibilities to one another.	Students reflect on the upside and downside of digital media, on the place of digital media in their lives, and about how to be upstanding digital citizens.	Students consider the major ethical challenges of being online, reflect on the place of media in their lives, and think critically about digital citizenship.
Privacy and Digital Footprints Unit	Students learn that they have “digital footprints” that can be big or small, helpful or hurtful.	Students actively manage their digital footprint so that they share but do not over-share information.	Students reflect on the impact of their digital footprint on their reputation, relationships, and future.
Self-Expression and Identity Unit	(We start to address this topic in middle school.)	Students consider how they present themselves online and offline.	Students reflect on what it means to be “fake” and “real” online.
Connected Culture Unit	Students explore hurtful online behavior and the “group think” mentality that is often involved.	Students explore the ethics of online communities through issues such as cyberbullying and online-community building.	Students explore how relationships and communities can thrive online, and also how hate speech and other cruel behaviors can break them down.



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	K-5	6-8	9-12
Respecting Creative Work Unit	Students learn that presenting the work of others as one's own is called plagiarism.	Students explore topics ranging from copyright to fair use, and reflect on the ethics of using creative work from others.	Students consider different models of attribution for giving and getting credit online, and adopt the perspective of various creative stakeholders.
Research and Information Literacy Strand			
Searching Unit	Students learn how to perform basic keyword searches and how to select a search site.	Students explore different search options for finding information, and use precise keywords to yield the best search results.	Students learn how to perform advanced searches from varied sources across different platforms.
Research and Evaluation Unit	Students learn what to look for when evaluating the quality of a website, and learn that not all websites provide equally good sources of information.	Students learn to identify high-quality websites, how to create online citations, and the characteristics of sites that make them appealing.	Students determine what makes information trustworthy online, and reflect on the benefits and drawbacks of sites that encourage collective intelligence.